Christian Community

Volume 7 No. 7 September, 1955

SOME PROBLEMS WHICH AFFECT OUR DAILY WORK

1. Guaranteed Annual Wage

The negotiations between the United Automobile Workers-CIO and the Ford Motor Company have made the initials "GAW" almost as well known as the "UAW" that initiated the proposal. The contract which ensued supplements unemployment insurance by providing certain benefits based on a percentage (65%) of the worker's average pay in the event of unemployment over a period of 26 weeks. Although the plan adopted falls short of guaranteeing an *annual* minimum, it goes a long way in recognizing the principle that the workman willing and able to work is entitled to a living whether or not the industry employing him has provided work for him to do.

Reasons advanced for the plan include the following:

1. It contributes to the economic and psychological *security* of the worker. Workers and their families have to eat every day: why should they not get paid for every day in the year?

2. If it is right for management, many professional persons, and salaried employees to be paid a year-round income, it is just for the man who works with a tool or a machine to have an annual wage.

3. Regular, year-round pay puts purchasing power into the hands of workers, which in turn makes for stability and prosperity for retail business people and workers in other industries.

4. The plan has been shown to work by the experience of such firms as

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Christian Commitment and Daily Work

During September and October our churches will be giving major attention to the Emphasis on Christian Commitment and Christian Community. It is our hope that every church will engage in the Every Family Visitation this month and will come to grips with the implications of our Christian discipleship for the life of the individual, the congregation, and the community as suggested in the various resource materials which have been developed.

One of the areas on which stress is laid is that of our Daily Work. Many congregations will observe the first Sunday in September as Labor Sunday, and more should. The Labor Sunday Message of the National Council of Churches is enclosed with this mailing for the use of pastors—for reading from the pulpit or for general distribution to their membership at that time. But in addition to this customary observance, we hope this year to lift up on Reformation Sunday the ministry of the layman in his daily vocation and to consider in a midweek discussion the meaning of his daily work in the light of our faith. Helpful materials have been suggested in the Manual and the Packet prepared for the Christian Commitment Emphasis.

Basic doctrines and general principles, however, are not the whole story. Our recognition as Christians of the dignity and sacred character of work requires us to consider the specific difficulties, problems, opportunities, and decisions that affect the fulfillment of the call to service and community, on the part of others as well as ourselves.

For this reason we offer for information, examination, and discussion brief interpretations of two issues which are of great importance at the present time to a great segment of the community—those who make their living by working for wages. We do not pretend to offer an exhaustive analysis nor have we summarized all the issues. Nor has the Commission on Christian Social Action taken a position on the questions of "right to work" legislation or the guaranteed annual wage. This paper has merely attempted to point out some of the major considerations which are often overlooked when we react to such questions within the limited experience, beliefs, and opinions of ourselves and the groups with which we are identified.

2. "Right to Work" Legislation

A number of state legislatures have enacted—and others are being urged to enact—so-called "right to work" laws. These laws have the purpose of making it illegal for a labor union, representing employees, and the management of industry to agree to a union shop. *The union shop* agreement *provides* that newly hired employees must, within a specified period of time as a condition of their continued employment, join the

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2. "Right to Work" Legislation

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union recognized as representing the employees. (The *closed shop* has already been made illegal by the Taft-Hartley Act. Closed shop clauses in labor-management contracts provide that *only* union members may be employed, thus excluding non-union members from employment by the management.)

The effect of "right to work" laws is thus to outlaw the "union shop," as well as the "closed shop," and to leave only the "open shop" legal. Employees may still join unions but are under no constraint to do so. The ultimate effect of "right to work" legislation will be to strip organized labor of its right to represent employees in labor-management relations.

The union shop is a development designed to protect the security of the union which has become sufficiently strong in membership to represent the employees in collective bargaining. It protects the union by insuring it against loss of its representative character by the addition of new employees who do not join *the* union *and* thus *might* reduce the union membership to a minority of the employees.

Certain employers' groups have been actively campaigning to secure in the legislatures of the various states laws banning union shop agreements. The chief argument is that it is unjust and undemocratic to force an individual to belong to and pay dues to a labor organization in order to hold a specific job. Seventeen states have passed such laws, all but one since 1947. Much is made, too, of the dangers of the threat of union dictatorship over management and public. Many thoughtful employers, on the other hand, have found it more satisfactory to deal with a single union qualified to bargain for all employees.

Many union members, generally, believe that the union shop is fair and equitable. They argue that since all employees benefit from the provisions won by the union, all should accept the obligations of union *membership*. Such membership is no less reasonable or democratic a condition of employment than payment of withholding taxes, health and safety requirements, or compliance with the regulations imposed by management. The right to a job does not assure anyone a particular job.

The American Civil Liberties Union, a pretty responsible watchdog of freedom, reports that the union shop and the closed shop do not violate any principles of civil liberty, but states that "right to work" legislation contains a threat to the civil rights of labor. Objection has also been registered that these laws are misrepresented: they do not guarantee anybody a right to a job.

It is only fair to expect that the enjoyment of the privilege of the union shop carries with it certain responsibilities on the part of the union having such security. It should be democratically controlled by its membership. Its members and leadership should be responsive to the interests of the community as well as to the interests of its members. There are instances in which labor organizations or leadership have misused their power. But many unions have taken effective steps to correct abuses and have grown rapidly in their sense of responsibility.

It is hardly likely that outlawing the union shop will contribute to harmony between labor and management, to a responsible economic order, or to social justice. Indeed, "right to work" laws may well worsen relations between employees and employers and weaken seriously an instrument which has contributed greatly to securing justice for workers, viz., the responsible labor union.

There is, of course, no question of making the union shop *compulsory*. In some cases good industrial relations have been established without compulsory union membership, as in many instances union shops have been mutually satisfactory to labor and management. Many students of the problem believe, as the Federal Council of Churches pointed out as long ago as 1949, "compulsory union membership should be neither required nor forbidden by law" but "left to agreement by management and labor" through the processes of collective bargaining.

At any rate, church members and committees on Christian social action should study the problem, keep an eye on developments in their own states, and express their views thoughtfully to legislators when the issue comes up.

1. Guaranteed Annual Wage

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Hormel Packing Co., Proctor and Gamble (soap), Nunn-Bush Shoe Co., etc.

5. The obligation to meet a year-round payroll may provide inducements to make production more even and efficient.

A number of questions have, however, been raised on the other side:

1. Will employees make the effort to find and keep employment if they can fare as well by *not* working? (The Ford plan heads this objection off by placing such a limit on unemployment or severance compensation that work will still be much more attractive than idleness.)

2. Can all types of industry adjust their production and distribution schedules to fit the requirements of continuous employment? It is often pointed out that soap and automobiles are made under quite different conditions. (On the other hand, one of the best tested GAW plans to date is that of a leading meat packer. Auto parts are less perishable than beef cattle.)

3. Within a given industry, are all firms able to offer a guaranteed wage, and is there not danger that smaller firms will be weakened or destroyed by their inability to keep up with the demands?

4. If industry does not make up for additional costs by increased efficiency, will those costs be passed on to the public in higher prices for goods and services? Will losses suffered by other elements in the population, particularly by unorganized workers, offset gains of workers in the favored or protected industries?

5. Will companies faced with demands for a guaranteed wage seek to safeguard their profits by employing fewer people, and thus defeat the objectives of a more widely shared prosperity?

At least two facts are clear: We are going to be hearing a great deal more about this subject. And, we shall not dispose of it by calling names. If this is not "the" answer, it is up to our society to work out a better way of satisfying the desire for economic security and social justice.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

The Phillip Murray Memorial Foundation, established in honor of the late President of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, last year gave $200,000 to the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. CIO President Walter Reuther, who has on previous occasions demonstrated his interest in the work of the Protestant churches and in the National Council's Department of the Church and Economic Life, made the presentation.

One half of the grant will help establish and maintain at National Council Headquarters a library and research center on the relationship of religion and ethics to economic life. The other half would assist in financing the Council's education program in the area of the church and economic life.

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Last spring during the Southern Bell Telephone Company strike the newspapers were full of stories of damage done to the property of the company. In many instances headlines, if not the news reports themselves, implied that such damage was inflicted by or with the approval of union members and officers. One did not read of the exchange of correspondence between Walter Reuther, president of the CIO, and President Joseph A. Beirne of the CIO Communications Workers of America.

At that time Reuther expressed his concern over the reports and his confidence that the union recognized the evil of malicious damage to company property. President Beirne in reply assured him that CWA did not condone such action or "goonism, whether practiced by the union, the company, or agents of either." In a memorandum to local presidents, Beirne repudiated any attempt to damage company property or any sort of violence. Pointing out that the destruction might have originated with members or friends who mistakenly thought the strikers would benefit from such damage, or may have been done by enemies of the company or of the union, he requested all union members and friends to do everything possible to prevent such action. "CWA policy," he stated, "is to carry on orderly, peaceful picketing during a strike . . . meanwhile seeking a peaceful settlement across the bargaining table."

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John Ramsay, who today enjoys high respect in the labor movement and in the Presbyterian Church of which he is a member, was once asked to move his membership from a local church because the president of the corporation for which he worked, a member of that congregation, might not approve his union activity. His quiet comment was that since it was a church of Jesus Christ he would remain!

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Al Whitehouse, Regional CIO Director and Disciples of Christ layman, was elected one of the Vice Presidents of the National Council of Churches at its Assembly last winter. Not in attendance at the time of his election because of other responsibilities, he thought highly enough of this distinction to fly to Boston to be installed with the other officers during the closing session of the Assembly.

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The Evangelical and Reformed Church has a number of men serving with distinction in the labor movement. Elwood S. Dietrich is Executive Secretary of the Cleveland Industrial Union Council. Oscar Ehrhart, who has a similar position with the CIO in St. Louis, is also President of the city School Board. Fred Somerfeld, president of Missions, Incorporated, Cincinnati's dynamic "E&R" church extension movement, is an ardent member of his local.

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The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. has for a number of years conducted an Institute of Industrial Relations. Two sessions are held at McCormick Seminary in Chicago under the direction of Dean Marshall Scott, with lecturers drawn from the University of Chicago, Garrett Biblical Institute, and other institutions in the community. In addition to these a Ministers-in-Industry Project, primarily for theological students, has been conducted during the summer months. Last year a third Institute was held in Los Angeles. The program is supported by the Department of City and Industrial Work of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions.

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The Federal and the National Councils of Churches have within recent years conducted two conferences on the Church and Economic Life, in addition to a special Conference on the Christian and His Daily Work. A third Economic Life conference will be held in Pittsburgh, April 12 to 15, 1956. The Evangelical and Reformed Church is entitled to twenty delegates to be appointed on the basis of certain vocational and functional percentages.

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Free public schools were a political objective of the American labor movement at a time when many influential people were opposed to free public education. Present-day threats in certain states to abolish public schools in order to evade the constitutional requirements of equality and justice represents a belated expression of the anti-democratic view which regards some people as inferior to others and therefore less entitled to educational or social opportunities. So, too, labor had to fight to establish workmen's compensation and many other gains now taken for granted. There may be a parallel in some of the arguments curently used against social security, welfare plans, health insurance, labor objectives, or labor unions themselves.

DO YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION?

About the Subjects Discussed in This Issue?

ON "RIGHT TO WORK"

Good Factual Summary of Problem: March 19, 1955 issue of *Information Service,* National Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., 10c.

Arguments For: *Do We Have the Right to Work?*, National Association of Manufacturers, 2 East 48th St., New York 17, N. Y. 5c.

Arguments Against: *What's Behind the Drive for "Right to Work" Laws* Department of Education and Research, CIO, 718 Jackson Place, N. W., Washington 6, D. C., 15c.

See Also *The Church Looks at Industrial Relations,* Department of Church and Economic Life, Federal Council of Churches, 5c.

ON THE GUARANTEED ANNUAL WAGE

Arguments For: *Sixty Questions and Answers About the Guaranteed Annual Wage,* UAW-CIO Education Department, Solidarity House, 8000 E. Jefferson, Detroit 14, Michigan, free.

Arguments Against: *Questions and Answers About the Guaranteed Annual Wage,* National Association of Manufacturers, 2 E. 48th St., New York 17, N. Y., 5c.

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NEWS NOTES

Subscribers to SOCIAL ACTION, the monthly magazine published by the Congregational Christian Council for Social Action, are promised articles in forthcoming issues which are in line with the Emphasis on Christian Commitment and Christian Community to which our churches are giving much attention this Fall. An early issue will deal with the "Relation of Evangelism, Stewardship and Social Action". Soon after that will come an issue on "Christian Vocation." Two other topics scheduled for treatment in the near future are "Asia, Its Needs and Possibilities" and "Our Nation's Schools". An annual subscription to SOCIAL ACTION costs $2.

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Members of the Faith Commission of the National Youth Council of the Evangelical and Reformed Church early in June sent a long letter on universal military training to Congressman Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House of Representatives' Committee on Armed Services. The letter, representing the views of the National Youth Council, offered oppostion to H. R. 5297, the Administration's National Reserve Plan. Part of their argument declared that "HR 5297 would strengthen military control over United States Citizens," develop "over-emphasis on military power, and a serious threat to the freedoms our nation has long endured." Furthermore, said the President of the Youth Council, "Military indoctrination would place a cloak of conformity on our society."

In place of vast expenditures for military purposes the Youth Council's committee urged the use of more peaceful methods of working for peace. These would include increasing support of technical assistance programs which would aim to "eliminate the conditions which give Communism strength."

IMPORTANT DATES IN SOCIAL ACTION

September	12-16	Chicago Christian Social Action Institute
	18-30	Christian Commitment Visitation
October	2-31	Christian Commitment Observance
	10-12	United Nations—World Order Seminar, New York
	17-18	Committee on Religion and Public Education
November	1-4	National Study Conference on the Churches and Social Welfare, Cleveland
February	7-10	Churchmen's Washington Seminar
April	12-15	National Conference on the Church and Economic Life

AIDS FOR YOUR PROGRAM ON ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Three recently issued resources will be of help to individuals, committees, and groups working on the relation of our ethical and spiritual convictions to economic problems.

One of these is a study guide prepared by the National Council of Churches Department of the Church and Economic Life, entitled *You, Your Church, and Your Job.* It is based on the Report of Section Six at the Evanston Assembly of the World Council on the Laity — the Christian in His Vocation. It may be secured for 30 cents from either the Commission on Christian Social Action or the National Council.

A document in a somewhat different vein is *Christian Conscience and the Family Budget,* available from the National Council for 20 cents. This is a case study of one American family in its endeavor to plan its spending in accordance with its Christian convictions. It is a chapter, written by Dr. Elizabeth E. Hoyt, taken from *American Income and Its Uses,* the fourth volume in the Ethics and Economics series conducted under a special Rockefeller grant. It will prove helpful for either personal reading, or group discussion. For the latter purpose fourteen thought-provoking questions are appended.

Audio-Visual Aids

A venture in another medium is the audio-visual kit, *Living Right at Our Work,* produced by the Jam Handy Organization in cooperation with the Department of Church and Economic Life and the Broadcasting and Film Commission. Based on the Economics and Ethics studies, but designed for more popular use, the kit includes a film strip, recording, and narrator's script with suggestions for discussion. It may be secured complete for $49 or be rented from the Bureau of Audio-Visual Aids.

Some Principles on Labor-Management Relations

1. **We stand against the exploitation of workers by economic monopoly by either labor organizations or management.**
2. **We believe in the right of free assembly of men without any discrimination against any minority group.**
3. **We believe in the right of persons to be employed in accordance with their abilities without discrimination based on race, creed, or color.**
4. **In our industrial community we must stand for the freedom of all people to know the truth which makes men free and for the basic civil liberties of all people to struggle for higher freedom.**
5. **It is understood that both labor and management must work together and resolve their common problems if we are to have economic peace in labor relations.**
6. **We further encourage the application of Christian principles in the entire field of employer-employee relationships.**

Adopted by the Commission on Christian Social Action, February, 1955.